

Aspectabund by The Readers Muse

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Characters: J. Hopper, Jonathan B., Joyce B., Steve H.

Pairings: J. Hopper/Joyce B.

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Summary: It started out with the little things.

Aspectabund

Disclaimer: I don't own "Stranger Things" that is all someone else's playground.

Authors Note #1: prompt response to - "maybe you could write something about what it would be like dating someone like joyce who, with or without the upside down, suffers from anxiety issues. i'm re-watching s1 and nearly everyone makes some sort of snide comment about her and the only person who really goes out of their way to defend her is hopper and while i don't want to wubify dealing with mental health, i think that's really beautiful of him that he doesn't give a shit and likes/protects her regardless."

Warnings: canon appropriate violence, reference to mental health/anxiety disorder, courting, flirtation, pre-relationship.

Aspectabund

It started out with the little things.

Admittedly self-destructive things.

The exact same things he needed, now apparently with company.

Things like bringing her a fresh pack of Camels near the end of the month when he knew money was tight. Or coming out after shift because he'd heard Jonathan mention something to the Harrington kid about a busted drainpipe he had no idea how to fix. Things like soothing her in by the elbows in the hallway of that damned hospital. Giving her something real to latch onto as she shook like a leaf against him. Nothing but a bundle of exposed nerves and anxiety that he knew all too well- considering the pharmacy he kept in his bathroom cabinet. Even showing up at the hardware store when it was still sleepy on Sunday morning - just before Church let out. Pretend to buy light-bulbs and getting a stupid kick out of the small smile that'd started playing all coy and eternally surprised on her face when she saw him these days.

He liked to think he had no idea what he was doing.

But that was just another lie to add to the daily rotation.

He wasn't sure where the line between taking care of someone who needed it and honest to god flirtation came into play, but he had a sneaking suspicion they might have already crossed it. Together. Maybe even before he'd realized that what he was doing felt an awful lot like-

No.

He couldn't do that again.

He'd promised himself.

He just couldn't.

He really didn't think much about it to be honest.

Not at first.

But he started to.

Especially right around the time he slammed some asshole's chin into the bar with the scream of shattering glass and a chorus of echoing gasps from the men ringed around the dingy tables. Holding the bastard up by his collar as blood leaked freely from a broken nose. Catching the movement out of the corner of his eye when Tom, the bartender just sighed and started pouring out a round on the house and forced the tv volume past max to drown them out.

"I said, shut your damn mouth about Joyce Byers, you understand?" he hissed. Feeling the force of it breeding darker things against the back of his teeth. Not sure how he felt about it when the bastard just gurgled a laugh out of the corner slash of his mouth. Trying to twist around to look at him until he pressed the man's forehead into the condensation-slick bar with a warning growl.

"Peas in a pod, aren't you, Sheriff?"

He didn't know until the next day, when he got the report from the hospital, that he'd broken the pig's arm as well.

That part was a blur.

Lucky for him, no one had said nothin' about the bastard not deserving it.

A/N: This story is now complete. Thank you for reading, please let me know what you think.

Reference:

aspectabund: letting emotion show easily through the face or eyes